

# S U M M A R Y

## THE SUSTAINABLE VISION FOR WASHINGTON'S SOLID WASTE SYSTEM

### ROUND TABLE MEETING 1

March 12, 2001

#### GENERAL MEETING SUMMARY

##### The Work Has Just Begun

The "Sustainable Vision for Washington State's Solid Waste System" round table meeting series brings community, business, and government together to identify coordinated approaches to solid waste issues. In spring 2001 meetings are being held in each of four regions throughout the state – a total of sixteen meetings – to develop regional recommendations for revising the State Solid Waste Plan.

##### Background

Ecology is coordinating the effort to revise the State Solid Waste Plan, which was last updated in 1991. RCW 70.95.260 directs Ecology to coordinate the development of a plan for all areas of the state that "looks to the future for twenty years as a guide in carrying out a state coordinated solid waste management program." The draft vision for the revised plan incorporates the top priority for handling waste, which is waste reduction, as stated in the Solid Waste Management – Recovery & Recycling Law – 70.95 RCW.

In early March 2001 "Meeting 1" of the four-meeting series was held in four regions across the state – eastern, central, southwest, and northwest. Participants discussed solid waste issues of importance in the region, reviewed a draft vision, and received a copy of "Issues Identification: Issues for Consideration and Discussion," Ecology publication # 01-07-001. This document summarizes the work to date on issues identification by Ecology staff, Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) members and other

## SOUTHWEST REGION

#### WHERE WE WANT TO GO - REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

##### Review of Draft Vision for Solid Waste Planning

Participants reviewed a draft long-range vision that reaches beyond the 20 year planning horizon. They raised issues of importance in their region regarding the impact, challenges and opportunities such a vision would pose solid waste in their region.

**A sustainable economic system exists, based on resource and energy conservation, pollution prevention, waste reduction and material reuse. The historically separate efforts to protect the environment and to promote economic development have merged.**

**Businesses** balance material and energy use with practices that reinvest in environmental capital, recognizing that such stewardship is the basis for their survival and profit.

**Individuals** recognize their role in achieving and maintaining sustainability as inhabitants and consumers. Consumers demand, are provided with, and choose goods and services with the lowest life-cycle impacts on energy and materials use.

**Government** economic development policies provide incentives to businesses and industry to achieve and maintain sustainability.

**Communities** create and sustain local systems that support growth within the limits of the environmental carrying capacity.

stakeholders for consideration in the state plan revision and is available on the project web site at: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/swplan>. The issue papers fall into three general headings: where we want to go, what we need to do today, and how we will move toward a more sustainable future. Throughout the round table meeting series participants will explore each of the issue paper topics as they relate to these headings.

Participants at the Meeting 1 sessions identified solid waste issues unique to their regions that relate to the draft sustainable vision. These issues, along with others raised in the earlier issue papers, were examined for their importance in the state solid waste plan revision. This summary of regional issues identified in Meeting 1 will serve as the foundation for the continued development of regional recommendations. Regional discussion points can be found in the *Where We Want To Go - Regional Perspectives* section of this summary.

#### Joining In

The regional round table series is designed for regions to work together to address jointly identified solid waste issues. Participants will recommend an overall, mutually beneficial approach to the state solid waste plan that takes into consideration regionally specific needs.

Participants of Meeting 1 formed the initial foundation for the regionally specific dialogue regarding solid waste issues. All "stakeholders" (all interested residents) throughout the state are encouraged to join their regional dialogues during the three remaining meetings.

### **OVERVIEW OF FOUR MEETING SERIES**

The goal of the round table meetings is to provide a forum for participants to work directly together with other stakeholders and have maximum possible input to the state solid waste plan revision at a regional level. This proactive involvement engages participants in dialogue with others of like mind who share similar interests on solid waste issues in "sectors." The following are the self-defining sectors that participants at Meeting 1 worked in:

- Business
- Environmental
- Government
- Solid Waste Industry
- Community and Civic Groups

### **PARTICIPANT COMMENTS**

#### **- Economic Issues -**

Economics issues were identified as important to address in the vision and issue identification, as it is now cheaper to dump than to recycle. It was noted that the way the economic system is set up right now, the burden of disposal is on the consumer not the producer, there are not environmental fees established for the producers.

The state is facing serious collection issues due to factors placing recycling in danger. This is a statewide issue, as well as a regional one. The virtual monopoly for the statewide collection industry has a serious impact on options for the future. The state level decision-makers need to 'have a spine' so there is money availability for stability in the recycling industry.

Participants explored what does stability look like here. The focus of participants centered mainly on the recycling issues that challenge stability and sustainability. They noted that there is very little to encourage small business and private enterprise to participate in recycling endeavors. Due to the labor-intensive nature of recycling, it is not economically feasible for many small businesses to do it.

#### **- Export of Waste -**

The region has a receiving station that ships to Oregon; this affects the southern most counties in the region. In addition there are ties to the Portland and Oregon area services, such as recycled business wastes.

Information resources for Clark County are dominated by the news media Oregon.

#### **- Characteristics of Region -**

The region is predominately rural, with the exception of Vancouver area.

The western side of the state, the wet side is not going to have landfills due to actions by the Department of Ecology and others.

The statewide ban on burning has an impact on the options available.

A large number of the industries involved in resource extraction in Washington State are located in the southwest counties. Most of these are dependent on the extraction of resources, not the reuse of them. The result is that the southwest region is more resource dependent than others in the state.

Participants decide, based on their interests in solid waste issues, which of these groups they wish to work with. The perspectives unique to each of these sectors will be reflected in the regional recommendations to the state solid waste plan revision. Issues in common within regions and across the state will be considered in the overall statewide recommendations.

The April, May, and June meetings in each region will provide on-going discussion regarding a sustainable vision for solid waste.

**In April**, participants will identify milestones for the issues identified by participants in Meeting 1. The two goals of the April meetings are to identify indicators for sustainability for a long-term vision, beyond 60 years, and also to determine sustainability-related milestones that meet the current solid waste systems' needs.

**In May**, participants will identify strategies and alternatives they wish to see considered for the region to achieve the milestones identified in April.

**In June**, participants will bring together the vision, milestones, and strategies into a regional recommendation to support movement toward a sustainable approach to solid waste.

## OUTCOMES FOR PLAN DEVELOPMENT

### State Solid Waste Plan

The State Solid Waste Plan is a blueprint or guide that provides a long-range vision for solid waste activities around the state. The state solid waste plan has been updated three times since 1972, and is currently a decade old. New waste streams have emerged and conditions, economically, socially, and environmentally have changed in the state. Ecology recognized that the plan no longer serves as a current guide to coordinating solid waste programs and that a revision to lead us into the future is needed.

### What the Revision Will Do

The foundation of this state solid waste plan revision is to create a more sustainable future, which includes the recognition that the solid waste being managed and disposed of represents a significant drain on the state resources needed to support our society and quality of life.

The revised plan will serve as a blueprint for local communities and state and federal agencies that implement solid waste and natural resource programs. It will provide direction on

### - Growth -

Massive growth in this region of the state is affecting solid waste issues.

Percentage of solid waste diversion is going down.

### Questions Raised in the Southwest Region Regarding the Universe of Solid Waste

#### - Universe of Solid Waste -

The following questions were raised regarding the diagram.

*Question: Where are construction and demolition waste?*

*This stream also includes metals and plastics, and that is not clearly noted on the diagram.*

Response Construction and demolition debris shows up under several categories, but seem to mostly fit under "Inert" wastes and "Municipal Solid Waste."

*Question: Where would street sweepings and highway debris collection go?*

Response: They seem to best fit under the transfer wastes category as they result from cleanup of streets and highways. Vector waste solids, for example, fit best under the "Transfer Wastes."

*Question: What is the definition of transfer wastes? What exactly does this category include?*

Response: This category of transfer wastes actually represents a concept to describe and name waste materials that come from other media and are fed into the solid waste stream. The category does not have a formal definition, nor does it have strict parameters. It represents a class of waste materials that needs examination. It includes wastes generated in the course of solving other problems, such as water pollution, air pollution, contaminated sediments, drilling muds, etc. These materials are continually being fed into the solid waste arena for management. Some of them are borderline in that they can be placed into municipal landfills, but also must meet certain hazardous waste handling requirements.

*Question: Where would special wastes, such as medical wastes or contaminated soils fall in this diagram?*

Response: Right now, medical wastes will generally be included under the Municipal Solid Waste category, as they come from institutional, commercial and residential sources. However, at some point in the future, it may be necessary to further categorize medical wastes.

- Contaminated soils should be in the transfer wastes category.

*Question: Where would sewage sludge be on the diagram?*

Response: Sewage sludge would be a transfer waste.

the regulatory and voluntary roles, as well as outline partnerships with others in the community that can help reduce waste and its impacts. The revision includes looking at a larger portion of the solid waste universe than has been planned for in the past. The plan will result in impacts to and involvement of many different stakeholders than traditionally have been involved. The plan revision should provide the framework and goals for everyone's role in managing waste more sustainably.

It is possible that the recommendations for the revision could be regional in nature and not be "one-size-fits-all." Regional needs can be taken into account in this way.

An orientation to the state plan revision history was provided at Meeting 1 and is summarized briefly in the following section:

#### History of the Process to Date

Ecology began working with the State SWAC and a number of local government officials in early 2000 on the approach for updating the plan. The initial idea was to update the plan in phases. Information revealed in this early phase of work indicated that a quick update would not be as useful to local governments as a full revision to the state solid waste plan. Throughout the focus groups, interviews, and discussions in 2000 two common themes arose regarding the direction for the future of solid waste: waste prevention and sustainability.

Work groups were formed to explore issues and provide background necessary to determine what elements will be included in the revision to the state solid waste plan. The groups had broad representation with over sixty people from outside Ecology. Over fifty meetings to date were conducted to develop the issue papers, which provide the foundation for the round table discussions. The full text of the issue papers can be found in the "Issues Identification" document\*. The issues covered were not meant to be exhaustive of all the issues related to solid waste; they include the following topics:

- Sources and Quantities of Solid Waste
- Roles, Responsibilities, and Authorities
- Litter and Illegal Dumping
- Collection
- Waste Disposal Reduction and Avoidance
- Waste Reduction

*Question: Do you have a definition for some of these; some have wide parameters?*

Response: The definitions for those wastes listed on the diagram are in Issue Paper 1. Some of the wastes that are depicted on the diagram are in existing law and regulations and some are characteristics that are in law or regulation.

*Question: Are sediments in transfer waste?*

Response: Yes.

*Question: Why is asbestos in transport waste?*

Response: Asbestos seems to straddle both hazardous and non-hazardous solid wastes. It is handled under air quality regulations and it has to meet hazardous waste requirements, but it can be buried in landfills. So, it doesn't neatly fit into any one category, however it probably should be specially noted as such under the transfer waste category.

## **REGIONAL ISSUE IDENTIFICATION BY SECTOR**

Participants explored issues of regional importance for a vision of solid waste that incorporates the theme of sustainability. Breakout groups provided the opportunity to explore the issues from the perspectives of government, solid waste industry, business, environment, and community and civic groups. Five main topics, from the issue papers were provided as discussion points: Universe of Solid Waste, Waste Prevention, Waste Diversion, True Cost of Solid Waste, Sustainability, see the general meeting summary's *Issue Identification by Sector and Region* section for additional detail on these headings. Participants also had the opportunity to raise additional issues in the small groups. All of these were reviewed for the level of importance they may play in the state plan revision process.

While participants were given the opportunity to rank two high, medium, and low issues for inclusion in the state plan revision; these were not intended as a voting mechanism for the process. These 'rankings' provided the participants a dialogue starting point. In the full group discussion that followed the breakouts, participants further explained the additional issues raised. The following summarizes the issues and their importance by sector.

### Government Breakout Group

Participants in this discussion group identified regulatory clarity as a key outcome for the state plan revision. The regulatory challenges, roles and responsibilities should be firmly established as an initial step in designing the State Solid

- Product Stewardship
- Landfills, Past, Present and Future
- True Costs of Solid Waste (includes Economics of Recycling)
- Recycling

\* Ecology publication Issues Identification: Issues for Consideration and Discussion, # 01-07-001 contains each of the issue papers and is available on the project web site, <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/swplan>

### Outcome of the Round Table Meetings

The plan recommendations are not written at this time; there is no drafted language to review and comment on. The recommendations drafted at the regional round tables will provide a foundation for the next phase of feasibility study and revision language development, which will follow the round tables in summer of 2001.

March – June 2001 is the time to identify what is needed to create a state solid waste plan that will have support from the diverse stakeholders who will be asked to participate in implementation activities. The door is wide open; there is flexibility to determine what is needed for the future. The draft language for the state solid waste plan will come out in Spring of 2002, and will be finalized in Summer 2002.

## **DIVERSITY OF PERSPECTIVES ON SOLID WASTE**

The March round table meetings centered on where we want to go – what we want our future solid waste system to look like. Thoughts and ideas raised in several of the issue papers (contained in the "Issues Identification" document) relate to this future system and what it should accomplish.

### Universe of Solid Waste

Issue Paper #1 Sources and Quantities of Solid Waste from the "Issues Identification" document examines the types and sources of solid waste in Washington State. A diagram depicting this universe of solid waste was presented to participants for consideration in the scope of the plan revision. The current and increasing levels of waste generation, new waste streams, and increasing impact on our resources, financial, social, and environmental give rise to need for consideration of all categories of non-hazardous, non-radioactive solid wastes in this plan

Waste Plan. This focus should identify the 'holes' in the state plan as well as address agency delegation of responsibility, and definitions. Currently, planning processes are on hold due to a lack of defined definitions. The revision will need to deal with new waste streams and plan for new systems. The horizon for the vision needs to be clear. Is it a 100 year vision with 20 year objectives?

Concerns were raised regarding how government will be able to regulate long term when businesses regulate short term. Waste prevention was considered highly important by these participants. Product stewardship should be emphasized to reduce product packaging/waste. In addition, producers should be held responsible to extended product life in order to reduce solid waste, such as computers and other technology.

True costs of waste was also highly ranked, and some participants noted that this was likely due to the supporting materials readability and the way these issues relate to tasks at hand in the solid waste system. True costs of waste should be identified. It is difficult to extrapolate the 'true costs' of solid waste into the future because of lack of control of what will be going into the landfill. 'True costs' include economic, pollution, resources, etc and should be developed into the initial cost of the product, as is done with vehicles, rather than the final landfill disposal costs. The costs of transportation of waste, road miles, fuel costs, emissions, etc, should also be incorporated into product costs. Long haul is forcing curbside recycling to become essential due to monetary costs.

Product stewardship could appear in many of the categories provided. The theme that needs to be incorporated is product responsibility. The true costs should be reflected in product costs rather than focusing on the disposal costs.

It was expressed that sustainability was a 'vision' and that all topics should support this goal. Therefore it was difficult to separate this out as a key issue to be focused on, as it is the essence of the plan goal. The universe of waste was considered a lower priority; participants noted that the description lacked definition and action. As stated, it described wastes and did not propose activity to reduce solid waste.

Participants noted that the first three issues provided related to short term issues facing the solid waste system. These could be considered initial actions for implementation within the next few years. An assessment of the true costs of solid waste and focus on the creation of a future system promoting sustainability appear to be more visionary.

revision. This includes the following categories:

- Municipal waste
- Industrial waste
- Resource use and extraction waste
- Transfer waste
- Inert waste
- Moderate risk waste

### Sustainability

Participants were challenged to look beyond existing systems and consider longer-term visions of sustainability in their region. Sustainability was explained as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

A question arose in all regions regarding this theme of sustainability. Where did it come from? The foundation work done over the past year found sustainability was a consistent theme, in focus groups, work groups, local solid waste plans’ visions and goal statements, as well as the state law that names waste reduction as the first priority. Increasingly, the federal direction for solid waste, which also informs the state’s future, is moving toward more sustainable approaches to solid waste. All these factors led to establishing sustainability as the focus for the state plan.

Where previous plan revisions and subsequent funding centered on recycling and the Municipal Waste Stream; there have not been great strides in waste reduction systems. While a strong recycling infrastructure does exist in the state, it is experiencing limiting factors. We will need to invest in the future while maintaining the current solid waste system to make the transitions necessary to get to where we want to go.

## **WHERE WE WANT TO GO**

### Review of Draft Vision for Solid Waste Planning

Participants reviewed a draft long-range vision that reaches beyond the 20 year planning horizon. They raised issues of importance in their region regarding the impact, challenges and opportunities such a vision would pose solid waste in their region. A summary of the regional responses are located in the *Regional Review of the Draft Vision* section of this document.

### Environmental Breakout Group

The participants in the environmental perspective dialogue considered waste prevention as a highly important issue for the state plan revision. Sustainability, waste diversion, and true costs were also considered highly important or important to a number of participants.

Participants noted that the government must make sustainability more attractive by leveling the economic playing field and focusing on economic dynamics. Subsidized virgin materials play a role. The free-market aspects of natural resources activities overlook their effects on sustainability.

The discussion on true costs has to factor in global economy and the environmental costs; currently these are not factored in. In addition, economics are impacted by the global economy. Sustainability will be hard to achieve because our markets are influenced by outside factors. The true costs need to be reflected in products. In addition, the true costs of recycling and collection, and the transportation costs in the handling of solid waste should be factored in as well.

Participants in this discussion found that the universe of solid waste simply identified the boundaries, which has been done before, and therefore considered it of lower importance. The focus should be on waste prevention and action.

### Solid Waste Industry Breakout Group

Participants in this small group discussion identified waste prevention as a key issue for the solid waste plan to address. The true cost of solid waste needs to put the money up front, in areas such as product responsibility, product liability, and responsibility by the manufacturer. Some examples of this include take back programs for hard to recycle items.

Waste diversion was also considered of importance in the state plan along with true costs of waste.

Participants raised questions such as how to measure true costs? Social costs are “subjective,” and the true costs need to be objective. The concern was raised that industry and society would continue to wait until quality of life has deteriorated before deal with this.

Participants noted that economics and education go hand in hand. Solid waste funding should be made available for prevention, innovation, and education activities. Educational efforts need to target, industry, homeowners, and youth. The government and industry need to be pro-active rather than reactive. This shift needs to include industries, large and small, as the vision and state plan directly impacts them. Education curriculum also should be targeted within school districts, as the future is our youth

## ISSUE IDENTIFICATION BY SECTOR AND REGION

Participants explored issues of regional importance for a vision of solid waste that incorporates the theme of sustainability. Breakout groups provided the opportunity to explore the issues from the perspectives of government, solid waste industry, business, environment, and community and civic groups. Participants had the opportunity to raise additional issues to the five main topics, drawn from issue papers that were provided as discussion points. These included:

**Universe of Solid Waste:** Focus on addressing the sources and generation points of various waste materials throughout the extraction, processing, manufacturing, sale, use and disposal.

**Waste reduction:** Concentrate on dealing with materials that are currently considered waste and look for ways to turn them into products. Preventing and/or reducing the volume and/or toxicity of waste.

**Waste disposal diversion:** Emphasize the diversion of waste materials that are generated out of end disposal by diverting them to other uses (such as land application).

**True costs:** Focus on accounting for all of the costs of solid waste decisions pertaining to current system or new ways of doing things, such as social, resource, health, pollution, and economic.

**Sustainability:** Focus on the creation of a future system that promotes sustainability, which generally is defined as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

While participants were given the opportunity to rank two high, medium, and low issues for inclusion in the state plan revision; these were not intended as a voting mechanism for the process. These 'rankings' provided the participants a dialogue starting point. In the full group discussion that followed the breakouts, participants further explained the additional issues raised and those of high importance to the sectors of perspective. A summary of the region's the issues and their importance by sector are located in the *Regional Issues Identification by Sector* section of this document.

## Business Breakout Group

Of the four people participating in this group, only one was actually a business person. This was noted as a concern for the utilization of this information. All participants in this group agreed that the results should not be construed as feedback from the business community, as they were not in attendance and they pay the bill. The participants who were present conveyed that true costs must include business perspectives and knowledge on the true costs of solid waste. The group identified additional parties to contact for involvement in developing regional recommendations.

Concern was raised regarding 'avoid incineration' which appeared under waste prevention. Does this mean avoid the use of or not utilize boilers? The result of this would mean that there would be no pulp mills and they would have to landfill materials previously utilized. In addition, the current burn ban will generate additional materials to the solid waste stream.

Transportation issues need to be addressed and collection disposal needs to be more efficient. The G -certification process currently produces higher advantages to hauling solid waste. Reduced tippage fees for recyclables and building materials could also be explored.

## **CLOSING REVIEW BY PARTICIPANTS**

Participants were asked to consider how the perspectives across sector reflect the issues of importance in the region. The following summarizes questions and comments both general and specific, regarding a sustainable approach to solid waste and its relevance to the Southwest Region.

### **-Regulations -**

If there are holes in regulation these need to be identified and the gaps need to be filled in. At county level they are handed regulations by the state. If local jurisdictions need clarification they have to call the state.

The new minimal functional standards should help in providing clarity on regulations.

It was noted that public officials and lobbyists need to be involved in this process, as ultimately they will be participating in developing regulations based on the state plan revision recommendations.

Clarity is needed on a definition of solid waste, recycling, and life cycle.

## THE NEXT STEP

Participants at Meeting 1 were encouraged to note who needs to be present at these round tables to capture the diversity of perspectives in the region. Those present appreciated that many new stakeholders play a fundamental role in developing regionally relevant perspectives on a sustainable vision for Washington State's solid waste system. The networking efforts within the region will continue to encourage participation throughout the meeting series.

Each of the four regional meetings will build upon work done in the previous meeting. The diversity of perspectives on solid waste issues and sustainability identified in Meeting 1 will be considered in the next steps.

At the April meeting, participants will start by examining the issues identified in Meeting 1. The two goals of the April meetings are to identify indicators for sustainability for a long-term vision, beyond 60 years, and also to determine sustainability-related milestones that meet the current solid waste systems' needs.

In May, participants will identify strategies and alternatives they wish to see considered for the region to achieve the milestones identified in April.

June meeting participants will draw together the vision, milestones, and strategies into a regional recommendation to support movement toward a sustainable approach to solid waste.

All are welcome and encouraged to join their regional dialogues during the three remaining meetings. Your views on the vision will directly contribute to regional recommendations. Join us for this opportunity to contribute to the Washington State's economic vitality, ecological health, and social well being.

### - Sustainability -

Industry needs to look ahead far enough to participate, and government needs to make it attractive. The investments in recycling have been made, and the thinking does not look far enough ahead.

### - Hazardous Waste -

What are the state's laws governing hazardous waste, in particular, those that pertain to non-hazardous wastes that become a hazardous wastes? Clarity is needed on how to deal with that.

### - Economic Disincentive -

The problem for business is that it is cheaper to dump waste than it is to separate waste out and recycle. Processes are needed that will address products that have "minimum residual value"

### - State Plan Revision -

A question was raised regarding how one statewide plan can reflect the priorities of all regions. Participants expressed concern that regional priorities would be lost by having one plan.

It was noted that one plan is needed for the state. While there are different jurisdictions with unique issues, there are issues in common that could best be addressed statewide. In addition, there is much to learn from one another about issues that some are facing currently, that others will face in the near future.

## THE NEXT STEP

At the April round table meeting Southwest Region participants will be tasked to consider how best to identify the milestones and strategies that will address the following issues regional importance that were identified by participants at the meeting.

Waste prevention

True costs of waste

Waste diversion

Sustainability

Universe of waste

Product stewardship

Product responsibility

Level the economic playing field

Who is paying the costs?

Funding for prevention & innovation

Education



## **ECOLOGY RESOURCE PEOPLE**

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Solid Waste Manager - Laurie Davies

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## **CENTRAL REGION MEETING 1 PARTICIPANTS**

Sam Adams, City of Kelso

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